

To Weakest Hope

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by Brensgrrl (2/3/2000)

(A Sequel to Nothing Begins and an adjunct to Night Music)

Rating: R; AU, Angst, Romance

Summary: Quinn contemplates a rash action. Keyword: Romance; Pre-TPM;  
AU Warning: Angst, UST

Archive: Anywhere with my emailed permission. (If you got this email, then you have permission.)

Feedback: [marajade@looknlearn.com](mailto:marajade@looknlearn.com) Very welcome, because this piece has not been betaed, but flames will be used to light the "circle of death" that the motorcycle rider jumps thru at the circus.

Disclaimer: Everything (except Quinn Harring, Terent Cisco, the \*nameless lady\* and the thin plot) belongs to George Lucas. I am grateful to be able to play in his wonderful world of make believe. Meesa makin' no money offa dis. I'm broke and only writing this for fun, so please don't sue me.

The title for this story is derived from Bunn's Bohemian Girl: "The heart bowed down by weight of woe to weakest hope will cling."

\*\*\*\*\*

"I can't take this assignment." Quinn Harring pushed the sheaf of flimsies back across the desk.

"Oh yes you will!" Terent Cisco, Chief of Operations for Danor Planet Corporation glared, his face reddening.

"No I won't, " Quinn struggled to keep her voice even, "all I have to do is leave."

"And if you do, we'll exercise the liquidated damages clause of the contract that you signed two years ago. We'll sue, Harring. And we'll win. You'll have to pay back all of the money we've reimbursed for all previous trips plus treble damages for this one. You signed up for this-- you make one trip, you've gotta make them all." Cisco inclined in his seat, smiling maliciously. " You wanna play hardball--we'll play. We'll put you out of business." A dismissive flick of his fingers sent the manifest sliding across the desk once again.

Quinn felt water rising in her eyes as she stared at the documents.

\_I won't cry. I won't\_..

"Look, Terent. I'm not doing this to cause trouble. I just can't take this trip, that's all. Please try and understand." She leaned forward, both hands resting on the front of the desk. "I'll get you someone else. You won't even have to pay me." Her voice softened. " I just can't go."

"Why not?"

"It's personal."

"You in trouble with the law? Got a jealous ex-lover, or something. .  
."

Quinn gulped and turned aside. "It's none of your damn business, okay." A croak.

"It is my business if you're telling me that you are going to stiff us on this trip. We have deadlines. The Proconsul must be on Kuat before the mass driver operations begin here. Money is at stake. Big money. And I'll be damned if I let operations collapse because some two-credit petty hustler of a spacer has an emotional hang-up." He rose from his seat and walked around the desk to tower over the Trader.

"Or are you having \_other\_ problems of some kind? I did tell you that you'd cross the wrong person someday. . ."

"I told you that it's personal, Cisco."

Terent Cisco gave a feral grin, his index finger stabbing at Quinn's nose in emphasis. " You are going to honor that contract you signed. I don't give a damn if every bounty hunter from here to the Rim is after your pretty little ass. Just take it, and my passengers, over to Kuat before you turn into Hard Merchandise, or I'll get you first."

She turned to the door, opening it. "Not if I'm dead, you won't," she hissed as she left.

\*\*\*\*\*

Quinn went through all the motions of the pre-flight preparations in a numb haze, her fingers flipping switches, her hands adjusting variances with the rote precision of a droid, her mind racing away from the routine tasks at light speed.

Maybe, just maybe there was a way to get through this in one piece. Kuat was a big planet, after all. Maybe there was a chance that things wouldn't be as bad as she thought--that she wouldn't see him again. That the old wounds wouldn't reopen.

Oh yes. She would probably see Kenn again. He had, after all, been acquired by one of the leading families, and those families would appear to meet the new Proconsul of Danor.

\_And I'll just stay in here and hide. . . \_

But she knew that she wouldn't. The need to see him again was more compelling than any addiction. But the rejection when he turned away --or worse yet, ignored her. . .

Quinn felt her stomach clench and her hands began to tremble, the hydrosponder she held refusing to lock onto the bolt. Her eyes filled and hot tears began their course down her cheeks, marking her helpless rage.

"Shit!" she threw the tool across the compartment, where it hit the bulkhead above the companionway door with a satisfying bang, barely missing Obi-Wan Kenobi's head, just before it crashed to the floor.

She started briefly in shock.

Kenobi. Kenobi was standing in the doorway, hooded in his Jedi Robe, arms tucked into his sleeves, his greenish eyes flashing astonishment, then irritation.

"What in Hares' hell are you doing here?" Quinn snapped, venting her ire at his interruption of her tantrum.

He knelt, a fluid motion, and lifted the hydrosponder. "I think you owe me an explanation first, seeing that you nearly took my head off with this thing. . ." he gestured with the broken tool in his outstretched hand, his lips stretched into a tight line.

His less than serene response brought some slight amusement and Quinn's lips lifted in a little smile as she dragged the back of a dirty sleeve across her face.

"I don't see anything funny about this--"

"Sorry, Angel Eyes. I wasn't aiming at you. Just trying to get ready to ferry some passengers over to Kuat. "

"How so? By smashing the ship to pieces?"

"I said that I'm sorry. . ." She crossed to him, took the battered implement from his hand. "Gods, you are beautiful when you're mad.

So, what brings you to Danor. . .I assume that Master Jinn is with you--"

"We are on mission; we've been assigned the \*Woman's Place\* as transport. That is, if the ship is still safe. " Quinn gave a bitter laugh. \_ Damn you right to hell, Cisco.\_

" Don't be a smartass, Obi-Wan. Of course the ship is safe." Quinn grumbled. " I suppose that the Corporate Proconsul is with you. If you'll help me out by seeing him to the first class quarters while I finish up here, I'll be forever grateful. You do remember how to get there, don't you?"

A strange feminine voice trilled from the doorway, "Obi-Wan? I heard a peculiar noise. . . "

A woman stepped into the engine room and Obi-Wan extended his hand to her, smiling. She took his hand, and he gathered her close, wrapping both arms about her waist affectionately as she came to stand in front of him. The woman seemed much older than Obi-Wan, short-statured, the tailored blue traveling dress she wore doing little to disguise a thickening waistline. Her intricately coiffed hair was accented by gray at the temples that gave her a distinguished appearance. She was elegant, feminine, and beautiful. She smiled warmly at Quinn, little creases crinkling at the corners of her eyes. "Allow me to introduce you to the Proconsul of Danor." At the sound of Obi-Wan's voice the woman turned slightly in his arms, lifting her face toward his. Quinn could almost see the sparks fly between them.

Watching them together made Quinn wince with the memory of the one time she shared Obi-Wan's embrace, and further hastened the coldness that radiated from her center.

"I am sorry about the noise--just doing the pre-flight," a stammer.

"I do remember how to get to the passenger accommodation and I'll be back to assist after she's settled in. It seems that you need the help." Obi-Wan said dryly.

Quinn stared for a moment as Obi-Wan and the Proconsul departed.

He had most definitely gotten over it.

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Day and night were alike in space. That problem was resolved by the diurnal controls built into the life support systems of most interstellar spacecraft. The monotony of realspace was also at least broken by the variation of the constellations, the glow of distant nebulae, the bustling passage of the odd comet, the occasional thump of meteorites against the ship's shielding. Science, however, had yet to create anything that could deal with the charms of hyperspace.

In hyperspace, the only things to see were the mind-numbing \*starlines\*, elongated and indistinct images of realspace objects that seemed as if they were painted on the viewscreens by some crazed intergalactic artist. And then there was the distressing tendency of certain protein-based foods to become unpalatable when exposed to the

space-time distortion.

But the nastiest thing about hyperspace was the silence--a silence that cloaked everything like a shroud. Only this silence wasn't dead. It was very much alive--deafening, roaring as it penetrated everything, suffocating even thought.

For once, though, Quinn didn't feel the need to turn on any of the loud music that she used as an antidote for the devouring hush. No. She would yield to its embrace. Tonight, this silence would be the lover that life had denied her.

\_As quiet as a tomb,\_ she thought as she checked the navicomp, made a last entry in the log and swiveled the pilot's chair away from the console. The \*Woman's Place\* would see her own way clear to Kuat without any further assistance from her. Good thing.

Dimming the bridge lighting, she withdrew and made her way toward her own quarters. Only to discover that the silence had surrendered to the sounds of muted talk emanating from the first class stateroom. She paused in the corridor, listening as her eyes turned in the direction of the wall-mounted timepiece.

\_Chrono 0200.\_

The low hum of a male voice, followed by the chime of high soft feminine laughter.

This wasn't mere late night chatter among the passengers. This was the sound of lovers' pillow talk.

Briefly, Quinn searched her soul, trying to dredge up some feeling--pain, despair, jealousy--any emotion at all about Obi-Wan's being with this woman. And found nothing.

No surprise. The creeping numbness that had been advancing in slow degrees ever since the meeting with Terent Cisco had possessed her completely, quelling both anger and grief. She had at last transcended emotion, arriving in a place of perfect passionless detachment.

\_How strange to feel so calm.\_

As she stood musing, the whispers dissolved into muffled moans.

Quinn turned aside, and continued down the corridor.

~~~~~

Qui-Gon Jinn had tried two Meditations, first the Evening Star and then the Opening of the Gates, but neither one granted him the stillness that he needed to find his center of relaxation. The Force had been roiling tonight, unbalanced and impure with darkness. Mentally, he stretched out, linking with its Living polarity in hopes of tracking down the source of the disturbance.

Only to find himself standing in front of the door to the Captain's quarters. He could sense her presence within, that she was alone and

was physically unharmed. And yet. . . He reached for an impression of her awareness and recoiled when his mind encountered an unshielded insensate darkness. Force-compulsion made him open the door and enter.

Harring lay on her back on the narrow bunk, her arms folded back beneath her head. She was stripped down to her singlets, unblinking eyes fixed on the ceiling, a hold out blaster lying on her chest with its barrel nestled in the valley of her breasts. She spoke without moving.

"Don't they teach you people to knock."?

"Of course they do." Uninvited, Qui-Gon moved to sit next to Quinn on the narrow bunk, and lifted the weapon off her body.

"I'll thank you to put that back where you found it and remove yourself from my bed and my room." Tonelessly.

"And I think that I'll keep it and stay."

Her eyes shifted to meet his. "Master Jinn, this is none of your business. Don't worry. You will get to Kuat to carry out your mission. I've already arranged passage back to Coruscant too. "

"Is this about Obi-Wan? "

Quinn gave an unnatural chuckle. "Hell, no."

"Whatever it is, I am certain that it's not worth resorting to this," he held the blaster up "Let's talk about it. . ."

She sat bolt upright on the bunk, heedless of her nearly nude state, and snatched the gun from his hand. "Look I appreciate that you are doing your Jedi Master thing, keeping the Code and all that, but what I do with my life is my own damn affair. I've told you that this won't make any difference to the job you are doing. . ."

"But," he took the blaster away from her again, after loosening her grip with a little application of the Force, "it will make a difference to *me*."

Quinn's body trembled in anger at the Jedi Master's continued interference. Tears flooded her face as her control broke. "What a crock of shit! Just get the hell out!"

She threw herself down, burying her face in the flattened pillow as the sobs came.

Qui-Gon Jinn dropped the blaster onto the floor and moved further onto the bunk, gently lifting Quinn's head into his lap as he eased his back against the wall. His fingertips stroked the back of her neck soothingly. "We will talk about this," he crooned.

~~~~~ She crouched hard by the ruin of some half buried machine on a desolate strand, beneath a sky tumultuous with violet clouds, facing a churning, black sea. Wind was pouring over the shore in icy gusts, strong enough to penetrate her deficient sheltering place.

\_Better cover. I have to find a better place to hide. \_

She stood, surveying. The entire span of the beach was littered with wrecked machines, lifeless droids and the skeletal hulks of derelict spacecraft; the trash heap of civilization.

There was something dreadful about the mounds of crumbling instrumentality that stretched toward the horizon on either side of her, something that sent a thrill of terror through her.

As if in confirmation, the wind knifed viciously through the thin dress she wore, fouling the air with sand.

Her mouth filled with grit, and she spat uselessly, even more sand entering every time her lips parted. Lightning flashed in the distance, accompanied by the echo of distant thunder. Suddenly, rain was sheeting down in an angry barrage. There was a storm out somewhere over the ocean and it was blowing into a full gale at a rapid pace. The surf was rising, beginning to swallow some of the junk, dragging it out to sea. She had to find some shelter from the storm before she drowned, froze or was sandblasted to death. She began to run toward the landside dunes.

Only to see someone coming. Despite the storm, the person was in no apparent hurry, moving in an easy purposeful motion through the obstacle course of debris. Shielding her eyes with one hand, she squinted, struggling to see who it was.

As the silhouette grew and became more distinct against the horizon, she could determine that it was a man, cloakless, dressed entirely in black.

Quinn slouched against the windward side of a sandbank and watched the approaching stranger as the rain pelted down, thoroughly plastering the thin material of her clothes and the sand she reclined upon to her body.

Then, the dawn of recognition . . .

"Oh damn, I'm dreaming . . ." she groaned.

"Not quite." he responded with a calm smile as he finally squatted down next to her.

"All right! What the hell sort of Jedi game is this? None of this is real is it?" Quinn gave a wild sweeping gesture with one hand. "First you invade my room and then you interfere with my mind!" She screamed at him, folding her body in on itself in a feeble attempt to gain warmth against the cold wet that continued to fall.

"It's real enough," Qui-Gon responded softly.

"Then why the hell aren't you soaked through to the skin and freezing like I am?"

"It's not my storm." he shrugged.

"Shit! I should have known that you'd give some dumb-ass answer like that!"

"Stand up Quinn, and let me help you make this stop." Command voice.

"I will not be ordered around inside my own dream!"

He rose to his full height and folded his arms. "Have it your own way, then." He turned to walk away.

He had only gone a few paces when Quinn rose from her crouch.

"Hey--"

Immediately he turned around and walked back to stand in front of her. She looked up into his questioning yet serene gaze.

"What did you mean, \*make this stop\*? And what's with all this junk?" Her teeth were chattering.

"This isn't a dream," he said softly as he gathered her into his arms without overture, "it is a psychic manifestation of whatever it is that is bothering you. To all outward appearances, you seem to be calm, but I can tell that you are extremely distressed. From the looks of things, you have been brooding over every single minute aspect of your situation for months--possibly years. And blaming yourself for everything that has ever happened to you. That's the meaning of the derelicts. On the surface your emotions are flat--but subconsciously you are in turmoil. Your anxiety is flooding out into the Force, corrupting it." Jinn gestured toward the refuse being consumed by the rising tide. "As a Force-sensitive I can tell you are seriously wounded. "

"I don't understand--then why isn't this bothering Obi-Wan: why isn't he here with you? " Quinn tipped her face up toward his. And felt him sigh when their eyes met.

"Because my Padawan is not as adroit in his awareness of the Living Force as I am, especially with his current \*distraction\*. His focus is elsewhere and he is shielding quite heavily right now." A little smile. "And you seem to be strong in the Living Force, almost as sensitive as some Jedi. If you had been identified years ago, chances are you would be Jedi. "

"Me. Jedi. Now, that is a laugh. . ." she gave a mirthless chuckle.

"Part of your problem is that you discount yourself too readily. You did that during your military career and you are doing that now. " He folded her closer to his body.

Quinn felt Qui-Gon's warmth seep into her and she reflexively relaxed against him, resting her head on his chest, focusing on the steady, unhurried thump of his heartbeat.

"Somehow," he went on, his hands now making comforting little circles at the small of her back, the timbre of his voice transmuting into a soothing croon, "you have taught yourself to release some of your torment into the Force, but because you are untrained, you do not know how to calm your inner self and disperse the malignant



emotions."

"The rain is letting up a bit."

"Yes. I am centering you." He tipped his chin down to brush against the top of her head and she was suddenly aware of being in his arms, the gentle touches of his hands, the press of his body against hers.

Embarrassed, she let her arms drop to her sides, breaking the intimate contact. Quinn backed away from him and turned to face the sea. He came to stand behind her, and extended his arm, pointing toward the towering black clouds in the distance.

"We can't run the risk of the storm coming aground."

"So what." Quinn folded her arms, missing his warmth. "I should certainly be able to stop it from getting here on my own. You said that it's *\*my\** storm. And even if I don't, what difference does it make? Nothing will change."

"You don't understand. This place represents your center, your self; the place inside where sanity resides. The Force cannot simply absorb such a massive discharge of negative energy at once. It must be dispelled gradually. If that storm comes ashore, your mind will be destroyed."

She gave a scornful laugh. "As if I care. Crazy. Dead. What difference does it make to me? On the other hand, I'd rather be dead--I'd be spared the humiliation, you see."

"Perhaps not. Perhaps you will not retain enough intellect to know how to put an end to yourself, and you will spend the rest of your days in an asylum. "

Quinn started to walk away as tears tracked her face once again.

Qui-Gon caught her in the circle of his arms once more. Gently but insistently, his mind dipped beneath her tattered shields, sweeping the surface of her consciousness, gathering traces of information.

"So now you know. Please let me go." Quinn demanded, a staggered whisper.

"If we are touching, it will be easier for me to help you."

"Let me go." A plea.

The Jedi Master released her, and she stepped away from him.

And as if someone had flipped a switch, the cold re-enveloped her and the pelting rain began anew. She shivered and forced herself to walk further away from him, toward the whipping breakers, closer to the uneasy sea. I will manage. I can do this by myself. I can.

Quinn kept on telling herself to concentrate on calming the waters and the boiling storm clouds. Mockingly, the bitter cold buffeted her. In moments her teeth were chattering again. Her head ached with

her battle against the elements. She had never been so cold. . .

Qui-Gon stepped toward her with outstretched arms. "Please let me help you. please. "

His hand, shockingly warm, suddenly drew her back against his chest, into his embrace.

"By the Force, Quinn!" his voice, though gentle, was urgent. "Don't turn me away because of your feelings for this lost lover. No one is worth this suffering. " He lowered her down on the chilly sand, drawing her into his lap. "You can't bully your mind into serenity--that will only make matters worse."

She finally gave in to weeping, burying her face in the front of his tunics.

"Listen to me," he said softly, "the fundamental nature of living is to go on. We all win at times and we all lose at times. "

"What could you possibly know about losing?" Quinn groaned.

He tipped her chin up so that their eyes met. "We stop to count our losses, but we go on. It is the will of the Force."

For a frozen moment in time Quinn was caught in the focus of his tender gaze. Once again, the rain reverted into a light drizzle.

"You need to learn to let go of expectations and live in the present. Then you will be able to welcome and learn from whatever happens--accept the good and let go of the bad. You keep on torturing yourself with thoughts of what you could have done to stop him from selling himself into concubinage. The reality is that there is nothing you could have done. You cannot live in the past. But you can \*be\* in the present. Be with me now . . ." The Jedi Master whispered softly, his breath a caress against her face.

Within a span of several minutes, she warmed and the shivering stopped.

"And now I want to show you something. . ."

~~~~~

A breath. Another. Perception of increasing light. Daytime, by the ship's clock. Quinn's eyes fluttered open to see the cabin filling with the gradual illumination that the life support system called 'dawn cycle '.

Even so, she didn't want to get up. She shifted a little, careful of the not-unpleasant weight of his arm about her waist, and turned to steal a glance at his face. Still asleep. Despite herself, Quinn smiled.

This place of nearness to him was so very comfortable, so as it should be. Briefly she reclined once more at his side, fixing her eyes on the ceiling. \_I could lie here all day . . . \_ It had been

years since she felt this much at ease with anyone.

She sighed. \*Too\* at ease . . .she felt the vague stirrings of longing, a wish. . .an impossible dream. But this dream was not for her--never for her. . .

Determinedly, she wriggled out from under Qui-Gon's arm and swung her bare feet to the floor. Her movement caused him to awake with an unselfconscious catlike stretch.

"Good morning. I am sorry--it appears that I drifted off. " His voice was soft.

"No problem, Jedi Jinn. I'm leaving now anyway." Quinn crossed the room to retrieve her flightsuit from the back of a chair. "I guess I should thank you--I mean, for last night. I am feeling better now. " She sighed as she turned to close the front snaps of the garment.

There was a slight rustling sound behind her, as he rose from the bunk. She pivoted as she felt his hand on her shoulder, their eyes meeting.

"It was a pleasure to assist you. I think we should have at least one more session, so you get the technique right. And please, call me Qui-Gon."

Quinn ducked her head a little, as she felt a flood of consolation--and something else?-- spilling over her. \_ No. Absolutely not.\_ She paused, her hand on the latch.

"Perhaps. I'll think about it, all right? Gotta check the bridge."

~~~~~end~~~~~

End  
file.